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# Internationalization of master programmes in public administration.

## An EU-US comparative study

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**Abstract**

The master programmes in the field of public administration reveal two trends, and in spite of being contradictory they ensure both the convergence and specificity imposed by the continental/ national realities: A thematic focus on public management (MPM), public policies (MPP) or public affairs (MPA); A diversification of the content and didactic methodologies related to the traditions and national public developments.

For the European states, Bologna process has induced standards for content, form and structure, supporting a possible framework of convergence of these programmes in view of their integration into the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). The current paper aims to highlight the levels of compatibility in terms of content, forms of organisation and finality, based on the analysis of master programmes in the European and American universities.

The target group comprises programmes provided by prestigious European and American universities, accredited by the European Association for Public Administration Accreditation (EAPAA) or National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration (NASPAA). The general framework of comparative analysis will comprise: criteria and standards of evaluation of EAPAA/ NASPAA; knowledge provided by programme about: society, political system, governmental policies, bureaucratic organisations and their management, methods and techniques of governmental management, methods and techniques of communication. Research methods: documentation and study of collections of information for each programme, qualitative and comparative analyses as well as statistic and correlation evaluations.

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## 1. Introduction

The reforms of public administration and public management promoted in the latest decades both in the EU Member States and OECD countries impose also on the national education systems in the field of public administration specific standards concerning the content, structure, pedagogical means etc.

Referring only to the Master programmes in public administration, the field literature and analyses (Bouckaert, 2008; Jabes, 2008; Connaughton and Randma, 2002; Matei, 2008; Matei and Matei, 2009) emphasise two trends and in spite of being contradictory, they ensure both the convergence and specificity imposed by the continental/national realities.

- A thematic focus on public management (MPM), public administration or public affairs (MPA) or public policies (MPP).
- A diversification of the content and didactic methodologies related to the traditions and national public developments.

After 2006, further the debates at the Institute for Research and Debate on Governance (IRG), pilot studies have been launched in Latin America, China, Europe, US in view “to identify and to compare these various programmes within public affairs on a worldwide basis” (Favre and Kilchenmann, 2007, p. 1).

Hajnal (2003) and Bouckaert (2010) reveal and analyse a few processes aimed to contribute to a controversial “convergence” of the Master programmes in public administration. Those processes are Europeanization, public sector reform, globalisation and marketisation.

The above arguments may be completed with the broadening of the institutional framework of debate, provided by the activities in the European Group for Public Administration (EGPA) or National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration (NASPAA), as well as International Institute of Administrative Sciences (IIAS) or International Association of Schools and Institutes of Administration (IASIA). Thus we obtain a relevant overview of the support for a new trend in the development of the master programmes in public administration, namely internationalization.

According to the current study, internationalisation of the master programmes in public administration represents an evolutionary process, based on compatibility, dynamics and convergence of the content, structure and finality of the mentioned programmes.

In this context, the objective of the paper is to highlight, by qualitative and statistic analyses, the levels of compatibility and convergence among various master programmes in public administration from some European states and US.

## 2. The target group and research method

The target group comprises programmes provided by prestigious European and American universities, accredited by the European Association for Public Administration Accreditation (EAPAA) or National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration (NASPAA).

“Public Service Management” – Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj Napoca, Romania (MPA\_UBB)

“Public Sector Management” - National School of Political Studies and Public Administration, Bucharest, Romania (MPA\_B)

Master’s Study Programme in Administration – University of Ljubljana, Slovenia (MPA\_L)

“Master in Public Administration” – The National Academy of Public Administration, Kiev, Ukraine (MPA\_K)

Master programmes in Public Administration

- University of Arkansas at Little Rock (MPA\_ALR)
- Auburn University Montgomery (MPA\_AUM)
- University of Washington (MPA\_WU)
- Georgia State University (MPA\_GSU)

The curricular analysis has proposed the ideas comprised in EAPAA (1998) as fundamental ideas and it has used public information as well as self-evaluation reports of EAPAA/NASPAA. In this respect, we defined *six independent variables* with characteristics that will be evaluated by studying the content of curricula and syllabi as well as the transferable credits assigned.

### 2.1. Methodology

- a) **A unitary framework of analysis** was used, specific for the second cycle of Bologna Process, taking into account master programmes organised in 4 semesters, each semester of 14 weeks of direct activity with the students. 30 ECTS are assigned to each semester, 120 ECTS is the total number of credits. Sub unitary or supra unitary multipliers were used for the programmes whose credit systems do not correspond to ECTS in order to make them compatible with the above unitary framework.
- b) The independent statistic variables,  $X_i$ ,  $i = \overline{1,6}$ , correspond to the knowledge areas emphasised in EAPAA (1998) concerning: society ( $X_1$ ), political system ( $X_2$ ), public administration and governmental policies ( $X_3$ ), bureaucratic organisations and their management ( $X_4$ ), methods and techniques of governmental management ( $X_5$ ), methods and techniques of communication ( $X_6$ ) (Matei, 2009).

For each independent statistic variable,  $X_i$ ,  $i = \overline{1,6}$ , the number of credits corresponding to the type of knowledge required will be quantified. The evaluation of the convergence degree will be achieved by using optimum levels of knowledge,  $X_i^{opt}$ ,  $i = \overline{1,6}$ , for each variable.

The optimum level of knowledge is determined taking into account a methodology specific for benchmarking. Therefore, we may consider three alternatives in the current study.

A1 –the optimum level of knowledge as mean of the levels of each programme.

A2 –an internal referential in the sample of the programmes analysed. In our case EAPAA/NASPAA accredited programme.

A3 –an external referential, recognised at European level, such as a programme provided by a prestigious European university.

We calculate the index of internationalization/convergence in the three alternatives for each programme:

$$I_{int} = \frac{1}{120} \sum_{i=1}^6 (X_i^{opt} - |X_i - X_i^{opt}|)$$

Usually, this index will be comprised between 0 and 1, the extreme values indicating the divergence (0), respectively, total convergence (1).

### 2.2 Empiric analysis

According to the structure of the previous proposed statistic variables, the evaluation in transferable credits of the content of the analysed programmes is presented in Table 1.

Table 1 Evaluation of the content of MPA programmes

Variable	$X_1$	$X_2$	$X_3$	$X_4$	$X_5$	$X_6$
Prog.	$m_1 = 16.50$	$m_2 = 16.625$	$m_3 = 30.125$	$m_4 = 13$	$m_5 = 32.5$	$m_6 = 11.25$
MPA_ALR	12	12	33	18	36	9

MPA_GSU	15	11	35	8	42	9
MPA_WU	23	31	10	11	32	13
MPA_AUM	17	34	23	17	20	9
MPA_UBB	14	10	41	12	32	11
MPA_B	12	12	47	10	30	9
MPA_L	21	12	25	14	36	12
MPA_K	18	11	27	14	32	18

Source: the authors

Those results lead to an evaluation of the index of internationalization (Table 2)

Table 2 Index of internationalization

Programme	Index of internationalization	Programme	Index of internationalization
MPA_ALR	0.81	MPA_UBB	0.82
MPA_GSU	0.76	MPA_B	0.72
MPA_WU	0.65	MPA_L	0.77
MPA_AUB	0.64	MPA_K	0.85

Source: the authors

## Conclusions

Analysing briefly the data from Table 1, we remark that the highest weight of the master programmes is awarded to the methods and techniques of governmental management (27.08%) as well as to the knowledge about public administration and governmental policies (25.1%).

The statistic analyses of correlation highlight most coefficients as positive, some correlations being very powerful, for example those between MPA\_ALR and MPA\_GSU and all the European programmes (coeff. cor. 0.867 – 0.946) and weak correlations, such as those between MPA\_WU and MPA\_AUM and the European programmes (coeff. cor. –0.089, – 0.123).

Comparing the statistic means of US programmes (MPA\_US) or European programmes (MPA\_EU), the coefficient of correlation is very high (0.792). Related to a general statistic mean variable (MPA), the highest coefficients of correlation are for MPA\_GSU (0.987), MPA\_ALR (0.945), MPA\_UBB (0.929) and the lowest coefficients of correlation are for MPA\_WU (0.276), MPA\_AUM (0.2961).

As a general conclusion, we may state that the level of compatibility of the content of MPA programmes in Europe and US has increased in the latest years. It is due to the two accreditation institutions EAPAA and NASPAA as well as strengthening of the professional dialogue among universities and academia. The level of the index of internationalization accomplishes a certain hierarchy, although the context of the actual research should be improved by incorporating the Person correlation coefficients.

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